



UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

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COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS  
UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20231  
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In re .

:  
: DECISION ON  
: PETITION FOR REGRADE  
: UNDER 37 CFR 10.7(c)  
:

**MEMORANDUM AND ORDER**

(petitioner) petitions for regrading his answers to questions 1, 4, 12, 15, and 42 of the morning section and questions 9 and 26 of the afternoon section of the Registration Examination held on April 17, 2002. The petition is denied to the extent petitioner seeks a passing grade on the Registration Examination.

**BACKGROUND**

An applicant for registration to practice before the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) in patent cases must achieve a passing grade of 70 in both the morning and afternoon sections of the Registration Examination. Petitioner scored 67. On July 31, 2002, petitioner requested regrading, arguing that the model answers were incorrect.

As indicated in the instructions for requesting regrading of the Examination, in order to expedite a petitioner's appeal rights, a single final agency decision will be made regarding each request for regrade. The decision will be reviewable under 35 U.S.C. § 32. The Director of the USPTO, pursuant to 35 U.S.C. § 2(b)(2)(D) and 37 CFR 10.2 and 10.7, has delegated the authority to decide requests for regrade to the Director of Patent Legal Administration.

### **OPINION**

Under 37 CFR 10.7(c), petitioner must establish any errors that occurred in the grading of the Examination. The directions state: " No points will be awarded for incorrect answers or unanswered questions." The burden is on petitioners to show that their chosen answers are the most correct answers.

The directions to the morning and afternoon sections state in part:

Do not assume any additional facts not presented in the questions. When answering each question, unless otherwise stated, assume that you are a registered patent practitioner. The most correct answer is the policy, practice, and procedure which must, shall, or should be followed in accordance with the U.S. patent statutes, the USPTO rules of practice and procedure, the Manual of Patent Examining Procedure (MPEP), and the Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT) articles and rules, unless modified by a court decision, a notice in the Official Gazette, or a notice in the Federal Register. There is only one most correct answer for each question. Where choices (A) through (D) are correct and choice (E) is "All of the above," the last choice (E) will be the most correct answer and the only answer which will be accepted. Where two or more choices are correct, the most correct

answer is the answer that refers to each and every one of the correct choices. Where a question includes a statement with one or more blanks or ends with a colon, select the answer from the choices given to complete the statement which would make the statement true. Unless otherwise explicitly stated, all references to patents or applications are to be understood as being U.S. patents or regular (non-provisional) utility applications for utility inventions only, as opposed to plant or design applications for plant and design inventions. Where the terms “USPTO” or “Office” are used in this examination, they mean the United States Patent and Trademark Office.

Petitioner has presented various arguments attacking the validity of the model answers. All of petitioner's arguments have been fully considered. Each question in the Examination is worth one point.

Petitioner has been awarded an additional one point for morning question 12. Accordingly, petitioner has been granted an additional one point on the Examination. No credit has been awarded for morning questions 1, 4, 15, and 42 and afternoon questions 9 and 26. Petitioner's arguments for these questions are addressed individually below.

Morning question 1 reads as follows:

1. Which of the following is the best way to recite a claim limitation so that it will be interpreted by the examiner in accordance with 35 U.S.C. § 112, paragraph 6?

- (A) dot matrix printer for printing indicia on a first surface of a label.
- (B) dot matrix printer means coupled to a computer.
- (C) means for printing indicia on a first surface of a label.
- (D) printer station for printing indicia on a first surface of a label.
- (E) All of the above.

1. The model answer: (C) is the most correct answer. MPEP § 2181 expressly requires that for a claim limitation to be interpreted in accordance with 35 U.S.C. § 112, paragraph 6, that limitation must (1) use the phrase “means for,” (2) the “means for” must be modified by functional language, and (3) the “means for” must not be modified by sufficient structure for achieving the specified function. In the above fact pattern, only answer choice (C) satisfies the above requirements. (A) is wrong because it does not use the phrase “means for” and recites structure for achieving the specified function (“printer”). (B) is wrong because it modifies the “means” with structure, and also fails to modify the “means” with functional language. (D) is wrong because it does not use the phrase “means for” and also recites structure modifying “mechanism.”

Petitioner argues that answer (E) is correct. Petitioner contends that all of the responses are subject to proper interpretation under 35 U.S.C. § 112, paragraph 6.

Petitioner’s arguments have been fully considered but are not persuasive. Contrary to petitioner’s statement that all of the responses are subject to proper interpretation under 35 U.S.C. § 112, paragraph 6, the question asks which is the best way so that it will be so interpreted. Selections (A), (B) and (D) contain limitations that direct the examiner to construe the claim according to its specific language without regard to the sixth paragraph. Whether the examiner may construe the claim under the sixth paragraph after an argument is not within the scope of the question. Only selection (C) meets the requirements of MPEP § 2181. Accordingly, model answer (C) is correct and petitioner’s answer (E) is incorrect.

No error in grading has been shown. Petitioner’s request for credit on this question is denied.

Morning question 4 reads as follows:

4. The specification in your client’s patent application has been objected to for lack of enablement. To overcome this objection, your client may do any of the following except:

- (A) traverse the objection and specifically argue how the specification is enabling.
- (B) traverse the objection and submit an additional drawing to make the specification enabling.
- (C) file a continuation- in-part application that has an enabling specification.
- (D) traverse the objection and file an amendment without adding new matter in an attempt to show enablement.
- (E) traverse the objection and refer to prior art cited in the specification that would demonstrate that the specification is enabling to one of ordinary skill.

4. The model answer: (B) is the most correct answer. 35 U.S.C. § 113 reads “Drawings submitted after the filing date of the application may not be used (i) to overcome any insufficiency of the specification due to lack of an enabling disclosure.” Since choice (A) may be done, 37 C.F.R. § 1.111, it is an incorrect answer to the above question. Since choice (C) may be done, 35 U.S.C. § 120, it is an incorrect answer to the above question. Since choice (D) may be done, 37 C.F.R. § 1.121, it is an incorrect answer to the above question. Since choice (E) may be done, 37 C.F.R. § 1.111, it also is an incorrect answer to the above question.

Petitioner argues that answer (A) is equally as correct as answer (B). Petitioner contends that only answers that assure success in overcoming the objection are appropriate answers to eliminate from selection because meaning of “To overcome this objection” in the last sentence prior to the selection of answers.

Petitioner’s arguments have been fully considered but are not persuasive. Contrary to petitioner’s argument based on the fact that only answers that assure success in overcoming the objection are appropriate answer to eliminate from selection, this is not so. The second part of the last sentence states “your client **may** do any of the following except.” The only answer in the selection provided in the question that is clearly against proper Office policy and procedure is answer (B). Answer (B) directly contradicts 35 U.S.C. § 113 (see model answer above). Traversing an objection by specifically arguing how the specification is enabling, as provided for in answer (A), is acceptable practice before the Office. Accordingly, model answer (B) is correct and petitioner’s answer (A) is incorrect.

No error in grading has been shown. Petitioner’s request for credit on this question is denied.

Morning question 15 reads as follows:

15. Able is a registered solo practitioner. Ben asks Able to prepare and prosecute an application for a utility patent. As part of the application, Able prepares a declaration and power of attorney, which Ben reviews and signs. Able files the application, the declaration, and power of attorney with the USPTO. Able quickly recognizes that help is necessary and contacts another registered practitioner, Chris, who often assists Able in such instances. Able, with Ben's consent, sends a proper associate power of attorney to the Office for Ben's application and directs that correspondence be sent to Chris. The examiner in the application takes up the application in the regular course of examination and sends out a rejection in an Office action. Chris sends a copy of the action to Ben to obtain Ben's comments on a proposed response. Unfortunately, after the first Office action, Able becomes terminally ill and dies. Ben does not know what to do, so Ben calls the examiner at the number on the Office action and explains that A died and Ben is worried how to proceed. Which of the following statement(s) is/are true?

- (A) Chris should inform Ben that the Office will not correspond with both the registered representative and the applicant and therefore, Ben should not have any further contact with the Office and let Chris send in a proper response.
- (B) Ben should send in a new power of attorney for anyone Ben intends to represent him before the Office.
- (C) Ben should execute and sent to the USPTO a new power of attorney for any registered patent practitioner that Ben intends to have represent him before the Office.
- (D) (B) and (C).
- (E) None of the above.

15. The model answer: (C). MPEP § 406. Answer (C) is a true statement because the Ben may appoint a registered practitioner to represent him. Answer (A) is incorrect because the power of a principal attorney will be revoked or terminated by his or her death. Such a revocation or termination of the power of the principal attorney will also terminate the power of those appointed by the principal attorney. Therefore, Chris's associate power of attorney is revoked and Chris cannot continue representing Ben without a new power of attorney from Ben. Furthermore, the Office will send correspondence to both Chris and Ben in the event of notification of Able's death. (B) is not the best answer because it suggests Ben may appoint a non-practitioner to prosecute the application and because it does not require the power of attorney to be executed (*cf.* answer (C)). (D) is not the best answer because it includes (B). (E) is false because (C) is true.

Petitioner argues that answer (D) is also correct. Petitioner contends that both answers (B) and (C) are correct since the question does not ask for the most complete answer, but just which statement is true. Petitioner also argues that since the applicant retained a registered practitioner in the first instance that he understands the importance

of obtaining a registered practitioner and would thus obtain another registered practitioner. Petitioner further argues that there is no indication that Ben would have sent a non-executed power, after he had previously sent one and that the facts suggest Ben is a careful and savvy applicant and would do the correct thing.

Petitioner's arguments have been fully considered but are not persuasive. Contrary to petitioner's statement that the question demonstrates that Ben knew to contact a registered practitioner and communicated the importance of having a registered practitioner, neither selection (B) nor the fact pattern specifically identifies whom Ben intends. Instead, selection (B) indicates that Ben may send in a power of attorney for anyone, as distinguished from selection (C) that indicates that Ben may send in a power of attorney for only a registered practitioner. The directions for the examination state, "Do not assume any additional facts not presented in the questions." Petitioner's argument is based on additional facts not given in answer (B). Since "anyone" could include someone that is a non-registered practitioner, and is not limited to a registered practitioner, petitioner cannot make the assumption that Ben would appoint a registered practitioner. Ben may not appoint a non-practitioner, as suggested by selection (B). While petitioner argues that the question does not ask for the most complete answer, the instructions state [t]he most correct answer is the policy, practice, and procedure which must, shall, or should be followed in accordance with the U.S. patent statutes, the USPTO rules of practice and procedure, the Manual of Patent Examining Procedure (MPEP), and the Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT) articles and rules, unless modified by a court decision, a notice in the Official Gazette, or a notice in the Federal Register. Accordingly, answer (D) is not correct because answer (B) is not correct and answer (C) is the most correct choice.

No error in grading has been shown. Petitioner's request for credit on this question is denied.

Morning question 42 reads as follows:

42. Applicant Homer filed a non-provisional utility application on December 3, 2001 with 3 sheets of drawings. He received a non-final Office action on the merits on March 1, 2002 rejecting all claims under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) with reference A and including objections to the drawings. The Office action set a shortened statutory period of 3 months for reply. Homer wants to submit several references in an information disclosure statement (IDS) for the examiner's consideration. Under proper USPTO practices and procedures which of the following actions, if taken, would avoid abandonment?

(A) Homer timely files a continued prosecution application under 37 CFR 1.53(d) with an IDS and required fees.

(B) Homer timely files a request for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114 with an IDS and required fees.

(C) Homer timely files a request for suspension of action under 37 CFR 1.103 with an IDS and required fees.

(D) Homer timely files a photocopy of the originally filed claims with proposed amendments marked in red, arguments that support the claims are patentable over the reference, proposed drawing corrections, an IDS, and any required fees or certification.

(E) Homer timely files conclusory arguments that the examiner's rejection is without merit and has no statutory basis.

42. The model answer: (D) is the most correct answer. See MPEP § 714.03. Homer's reply is a *bona fide* attempt to advance the application to final action. The amendment will be considered as a non-responsive amendment because it does not comply with 37 C.F.R. § 1.121. The applicant will be given a new time period of one month or 30 days from the mailing date of the notice of non-compliance to correct the amendment. 37 C.F.R. § 1.135(c); MPEP § 714.03. Answer (A) is incorrect because the application filed on December 3, 2001 is not eligible for the CPA practice. See MPEP § 706.07(h), page 700-71. Answer (B) is incorrect because the prosecution in the application is not closed. A reply in compliance with 37 C.F.R. § 1.111 is missing. See 37 C.F.R. § 1.114(a); MPEP § 706.07(h). Answer (C) is incorrect because action cannot be suspended in an application which contains an outstanding Office action awaiting reply by the applicant. See 37 C.F.R. § 1.103; MPEP § 709. Answer (E) is incorrect because the reply does not meet the requirements of 37 C.F.R. § 1.111 and is not considered a *bona fide* attempt under 37 C.F.R. § 1.135(c). Also the response does not reply to the drawing objections.

Petitioner argues that none of the answers are correct so that petitioner's answer (B) is equally correct as the model answer (D). Petitioner contends that none of the selected answers truly "avoid" abandonment in that the answer would prevent that application from ever becoming abandoned. Petitioner further contends that model answer (D) would only "delay" abandonment.

Petitioner's arguments have been fully considered but are not persuasive. Contrary to petitioner's statement that answer (D) would only delay abandonment, answer (D) provided a *bona fide* attempt at a proper and timely reply to the outstanding Office action. The action in answer (D) would stop the current time for reply from continuing to run, and thereby, avoiding the abandonment of the application. Answers (A), (B), (C) and (E) are clearly inconsistent with proper Office policy and procedure as explained in the model answer. None of the actions in answers (A), (B), (C) and (E) would have a proper reply, or a *bona fide* attempt at a proper reply, which would stop the current time period for reply from continuing to run. Accordingly, model answer (D) is correct and petitioner's answer (B) is incorrect.

No error in grading has been shown. Petitioner's request for credit on this question is denied.



Afternoon question 9 reads as follows:

9. An applicant's claim stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as being obvious over Larry in view of Morris. Larry and Morris are references published more than one year before applicant's effective filing. Although the examiner cites no suggestion or motivation for combining the references, they are, in fact, combinable. Which of the following arguments could properly show that the claim is not obvious?

- (A) The inventions disclosed by Larry and Morris cannot be physically combined.
- (B) Neither Larry nor Morris provides an express suggestion to combine the references.
- (C) As recognized by businessmen, the high cost of Larry's device teaches away from combining it with the simpler device of Morris.
- (D) Absent a suggestion or motivation, the examiner has not shown that combining Larry's with Morris's device would have been within the level of ordinary skill of the art.
- (E) None of the above.

9. The model answer: (D) is correct. "The mere fact that references can be combined or modified does not render the resultant combination obvious unless the prior art also suggests the desirability of the combination." MPEP § 2143.01 (citing *In re Mills*, 916 F.2d 680, 16 USPQ2d 1430 (Fed. Cir. 1990)). Here, the examiner fails to show that substituting Larry's device for another type of device in Morris would have been desirable. (A) is incorrect. The test of obviousness is not whether the features or elements of the references are physically combinable. *In re Keller*, 642 F.2d 413, 425, 208 USPQ 871, 881 (CCPA 1981); *In re Sneed*, 710 F.2d 1544, 1550, 218 USPQ 385, 389 (Fed. Cir. 1983). (B) is incorrect. "The rationale to modify or combine the prior art does not have to be expressly stated in the prior art; the rationale may be expressly or impliedly contained in the prior art or it may be reasoned from knowledge generally available to one of ordinary skill in the art, established scientific principles, or legal precedent established by prior case law." MPEP § 2144 (citing *In re Fine*, 837 F.2d 1071, 5 USPQ2d 1596 (Fed. Cir. 1988); *In re Jones*, 958 F.2d 347, 21 USPQ2d 1941 (Fed. Cir. 1992)). Here, the argument overlooks the fact that a suggestion to combine Larry and Morris may be reasoned from knowledge generally available to one of ordinary skill in the art, established scientific principles, or legal precedent established by prior case law. (C) is incorrect. "The fact that a combination would not be made by businessmen for economic reasons does not mean that a person of ordinary skill in the art would not make the combination because of some technological incompatibility." MPEP § 2145 (citing *In re Farrenkopf*, 713 F.2d 714, 718, 219 USPQ 1, 4 (Fed. Cir. 1983)). Here, the high cost of Larry's device does not teach away from a person of ordinary skill in the art combining it with Morris' device.

Petitioner argues that answer (E) is the most correct answer as model answer (D) is equally incorrect as answers (A), (B) and (C). Petitioner contends a showing that the claim is not obvious could be achieved by a showing that the examiner has not established a *prima facie* case of obviousness. Petitioner further contends that such a showing was not one of the selected answers, thereby making answer (E) the most correct.

Petitioner's arguments have been fully considered but are not persuasive. Contrary to petitioner's statement that that none of the selected answers provide a showing that the examiner failed to establish a *prima facie* case of obviousness, this is not the case. Answer (D) states that absent motivation to combine that was within the skill of one of ordinary skill in the art, obviousness is not shown. Answer (D) does, indeed, illustrate that the examiner failed to meet his or her burden in establishing a *prima facie* showing of obviousness. Accordingly, model answer (D) is correct and petitioner's answer (C) is incorrect.

Afternoon question 26 reads as follows:

26. Jack Flash filed an application for patent on December 16, 1998, disclosing and claiming self-extinguishing safety candles, methods of making them, and a special reflective housing for holding the burning candles. Following a three-way restriction, Mr. Flash prosecuted the claims for the candle, and was granted a patent ("P1"), which issued on April 6, 1999. Mr. Flash filed a divisional application containing claims for the method of making the candles and for the reflective housing on April 5, 1999. The examiner did not restrict the claims, but before the first action on the merits was mailed, Mr. Flash suffered business reversals and canceled the claims to the reflective housing to reduce the cost of obtaining his patent. A patent on the method of making the candles ("P2"), issued on November 30, 1999. Although you reviewed and signed all of the papers in the prosecution of the applications, your assistant, Annie, did all the work under your supervision. On April 1, 2001, Mr. Flash jumps into your office. He has just won a million dollars on some television game show you've never heard of, and he wants to "revive his patents." He is also concerned about an article he tore out of the February 1986 issue of the trade publication Wicks and Sticks, that shows a drawing of a dissimilar candle that would nevertheless raise a question of patentability, with the caption "It's just a dream: it can't be made we've tried a thousand times, don't bother." He also has a video tape first sold by a local hobbyist at his store in October 1999, showing a process of candle making that may be within the scope of his process claims. "But it's such a stupid way to do things - it's expensive and it doesn't work very well- it doesn't even make a safety candle," Jack shouts, jumping on your desk. He is so excited he can barely get the words out. Annie volunteers to work with him to figure out what he can do. On the next day, Friday, April 2, just as you are getting ready to close up and head for the LeTort Creek with your cane rod Annie drops five proposals on your desk. After reviewing Annie's proposals, but before you leave, you must instruct her to take the action that will best protect Mr. Flash's patent rights. Which of the following acts would be in accordance with proper USPTO practice and procedure, and Annie should be authorized to follow?

accordance with proper USPTO practice and procedure, and Annie should be authorized to follow?

- (A) File a broadening reissue application on P1, alleging error in failing to claim sufficiently broadly by not filing claims for the reflective housing.
- (B) File a request for reexamination of P1 based on the Wicks and Sticks article.
- (C) File a new, nonprovisional patent application claiming benefit of the filing date of parent application that issued as patent P2.
- (D) File a request for reexamination of P2 in view of the video tape, intending to narrow the process claims to avoid the video tape if the USPTO finds a significant new question of patentability, and seeking to add claims to the reflective housing.
- (E) File a broadening reissue of P2, alleging error in claiming the process too broadly, because it covers the process disclosed on the video tape, and alleging further error in claiming less than the inventor had a right to claim, by not claiming the reflective housing.

26. The model answer: The best answer is (B), because, under the facts as stated, the Wicks and Sticks article “shows a drawing of a dissimilar candle that would nevertheless *raise a question of patentability*” (italics added). Although the published article might not be anticipatory, it can raise a substantial new question of patentability under 37 C.F.R. § 1.515. (A) is incorrect because it is not error to fail to claim restricted inventions that were not elected and that were not claimed in divisional applications. In re *Orita* 550 F.2d 1277, 1280, 193 USPQ 145, 148 (CCPA 1977); MPEP § 1450. (C) is not the best answer because there is no copendency between the new nonprovisional application and parent application that issued as patent P2. 35 U.S.C. § 120. (D) is not correct because a request for reexamination cannot be based on a video tape ~~broadened claims may not be filed in a reexamination~~. (E) is not the best answer because it is not clear there is an “error” under 35 U.S.C. § 251 with respect to the claims for the reflective housing. MPEP §§ 1402, 1450.

Petitioner argues that answer (C) is correct. Petitioner contends that the model answer is not the best answer because a reexamination requires a reference to be either new or substantial, and the Wicks and Sticks reference would not affect Flash’s patent based on obviousness. Petitioner contends that Annie is not authorized to file a request for reexamination based on the mere citation or new patents or printed publications without an explanation as to how the prior art raises a substantial new question of patentability. Petitioner also contends that the question is flawed because it fails to either implicitly or explicitly states that the question of patentability was “new” or “substantial.”

Petitioner's arguments have been fully considered but are not persuasive. Contrary to petitioner's statement that Annie would not be authorized to file a request for reexamination, the article including the drawing raises a question of patentability, that would probably be overcome due to the negative comments, which would strengthen the patent. Of course, according to proper USPTO policy and procedures, the Office would not grant an order for reexamination if a substantial new question of patentability is not found. It is the Office that makes this determination. See MPEP 2216. Annie is not the deciding official of whether the question of patentability introduced by the article is new or substantial. Furthermore, Annie is authorized to file a request for reexamination "based on the Wicks and Sticks article" by 37 CFR 1.510. The wording in the answer is similar to the wording in 37 CFR 1.510(a) and does not mean that Annie did not file the explanation as required by 37 CFR 1.510(b). Selection (C) is clearly wrong because there is no copendency between the patent applications (both patents have already issued) and any continuing application that may be filed as required by 35 U.S.C. § 120. Therefore, Annie is not authorized to file such a continuing application under proper USPTO policy and procedures. Accordingly, model answer (B) is correct and petitioner's answer (C) is incorrect.

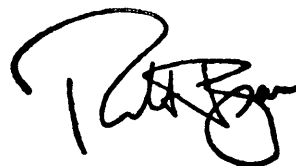
No error in grading has been shown. Petitioner's request for credit on this question is denied.

**ORDER**

For the reasons given above, one point has been added to petitioner's score on the Examination. Therefore, petitioner's score is 68. This score is insufficient to pass the Examination.

Upon consideration of the request for regrade to the Director of the USPTO, it is ORDERED that the request for a passing grade on the Examination is denied.

This is a final agency action.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Spar', is positioned above the printed name and title of the signatory.

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Robert J. Spar  
Director, Office of Patent Legal Administration  
Office of the Deputy Commissioner  
for Patent Examination Policy